

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRASILIA 000210

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2015

TAGS: PREL BR

SUBJECT: REGIONAL ISSUES: GOB VIEWS ON VENEZUELA-COLOMBIA
DISPUTE AND SITUATION IN BOLIVIA

REF: A. STATE 11483

B. BOGOTA 555

C. LA PAZ 193 AND 194

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN D. DANILOVICH. REASON: 1.4 (B)(D).

11. (C) Summary: Senior GOB officials told Ambassador and PolCounselor this week that Brazil is prepared to play an informal role in helping mediate a resolution to the Venezuela-Colombia dispute following the rendition of a FARC official from Venezuela to Colombia in recent days. President Lula da Silva met with President Uribe in Leticia on 20 January and spoke by phone to President Chavez the same day. The GOB is counseling "good sense" and efforts to lower the tone and is optimistic that both governments want to avoid escalation. Presidential envoy Marco Aurelio Garcia will see Chavez in Caracas on 22 January, and Chavez will attend the Porto Alegre Social Forum in Brazil next week, where he will meet Lula, affording other opportunities for GOB mediation. On Bolivia, a senior presidency foreign affairs official said that the GOB does not believe there is imminent danger of a resignation by President Mesa, despite his threats, but remains intensely concerned about the unstable situation there. End summary.

VENEZUELA-COLOMBIA

12. (C) On 20 January Ambassador raised ref a points on the Venezuela-Colombia dispute with Ambassador Antonio Aguiar Patriota, chief of staff to FM Amorim, and asked for MRE views on the state of play. Patriota responded that Amorim had spoken by phone with both President Uribe and President Chavez prior to President Lula's meeting in Leticia with Uribe on 20 January. Patriota said Lula and Uribe discussed the dispute for an hour during their meeting, and that Lula had spoken the same day by phone with Chavez. Lula had subsequently expressed the view that Chavez needed to be "handled very calmly." Patriota said Brazil needs to maintain friendly relations with both neighbors and is prepared to act in an informal capacity to try to facilitate a resolution. Ambassador Danilovich stressed USG concern about Chavez/Venezuelan connections with FARC and other foreign terrorist organizations, and reiterated our commitment to fight terrorism in the region and globally. He also noted the mediation efforts of Peru's government in leadership of the Andean Community and urged the GOB to be supportive. (Note: PolCounselor also provided demarche points to the foreign ministry's Andean division chief and to the international affairs office at the Presidency. End note.)

13. (U) On 20 January Presidential spokesman Andre Singer told journalists at Planalto that President Lula had discussed the dispute by telephone with Chavez and in Leticia with Uribe, and indicated that, "in as much as the two presidents took the initiative to touch on the subject with President Lula, it was understood that (Brazil) should act to facilitate a reapproximation between the two countries."

14. (C) PolCounselor followed up Singer's statement on 21 January with a call to Marcel Biato (strictly protect), deputy foreign affairs advisor to Lula. Biato said that Lula had counseled "good sense" and the need to cool off tensions by lowering the volume on public statements and looking for good-will gestures. Essentially, Brazil will offer an informal channel for communication and good offices for the two governments "to find a way out," according to Biato. It is the GOB's assessment that both the GOC and GOV are inclined to seek a resolution, since the GOB sees no political advantage to either side in an escalation. Biato confirmed Lula's senior foreign affairs advisor, Marco Aurelio Garcia, will travel to Caracas on 22 January to see Chavez, a trip previously scheduled as a planning mission for Lula's February visit to Venezuela, but Biato said Garcia will further discuss with Chavez resolution options for the dispute. Biato also noted that Chavez will travel to Brazil next week for the Porto Alegre Social Forum, which Lula is also planning to attend, providing additional opportunities for GOB mediation. Biato added Lula was promised on the phone by Chavez that he would not make inflammatory statements while in Brazil (presumably against either the GOB or Colombia).

BOLIVIA

15. (C) PolCounselor also asked Biato for views on the current tensions in Bolivia (Biato's boss, Marco Aurelio Garcia, has been to Bolivia as Lula's envoy). Biato said he had talked to Brazil's Ambassador in La Paz, Antonino Mena Goncalves, at length on the evening of 20 January, and Goncalves indicated he had just consulted with other Ambassadors in La Paz (including, Biato presumed, Ambassador Greenlee) and the consensus was that there is not an imminent probability of Mesa's following through on his resignation threat. Biato said that is the GOB view at the moment, but nonetheless there is intense concern that Mesa's concessions are weakening him, contributing to a situation so precarious that he sees a political necessity in "continuously threatening a plunge into chaos" (through resignation). Biato confirmed Lula continues to try to "persuade by example" -- i.e., stressing to opposition leader Evo Morales the importance of patience and adhering to constitutional processes in pursuing political legitimacy, as reflected in Lula's own personal rise to the presidency. PolCounselor replied that the U.S. Embassy and Brazil's embassy in La Paz have discussed their shared questions about the nature of Chavez's influence on Morales (ref C), and asked whether there is GOB concern that Chavez's "mentoring" of Morales may be less salutary in content and effect than Lula's. Biato demurred on discussing the question in depth, saying only that the GOB believes Chavez is, at bottom, enough of a democrat to not stoke up instability in fragile Bolivia.

16. (C) Comment: It appears the GOB, both in the Presidency and the foreign ministry, is willing to provide a conflict-resolution channel for Colombia and Venezuela, but wants to avoid a formalized, drawn-out role. We are seeking a meeting with Marco Aurelio Garcia, and will follow Chavez-Lula contacts on the issue in Porto Alegre (our Labor Attaché will attend the forum and report for the Mission). On Bolivia, the GOB seems relatively hopeful that Mesa will remain; we anticipate the GOB would engage robustly, both politically and economically (e.g., taking steps to accelerate financial support) in the event of a dramatic deterioration.

DANILOVICH